

## Against the Grain

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Volume 25 | Issue 3

Article 43

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June 2013

# At Brunning: People & Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything/How We Understand What We Do

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### Recommended Citation

Brunning, Dennis (2013) "At Brunning: People & Technology: At the Only Edge that Means Anything/How We Understand What We Do," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 25: Iss. 3, Article 43.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.6550>

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## At the Only Edge that Means Anything / How We Understand What We Do

by **Dennis Brunning** (E Humanities Development Librarian, Arizona State University) <dennis.brunning@gmail.com>

### Zeitgeist Drops: The Road to Mendeley

In what many open access true believers may think is treason, **Mendeley** founders sold their research reference manager slash pdf organizer slash science community social sharing Web startup to **Elsevier**.

In case you need a **Mendeley** primer, it is a reference manager for pdf. You find an article on the Web, download the pdf, and move it to sharable folders. You can also create properly formatted bibliographies or endnotes and you search your research as easily as you search the Internet. Most operating systems are supported and storage is free for your first two gigabytes.

**Mendeley Institutional** is **Swet's** licensed version. It provides a useful dashboard for institutions to manage and track use presumably to better evaluate subscriptions. It will continue under the new owner.

For five years registered users held **Mendeley** in high esteem. It was a darling among open access advocates who used it as a smooth and easy way to promote shared access without interference from publishers. In **Mendeley** you could read your science, annotate your articles, and follow the research behavior of other registered users.

Surprisingly there was little vitriol over this move. Some researchers may simply be tired of trying to outsmart **Elsevier**. Others were happy for the young engineers who made money and could move on to other startups. A few were going to move on to non-**Elsevier** properties.

In remarks posted online, **Mendeley's** co-founder **Victor Henning**, explained recent developments. He mentioned the close cooperation between **Elsevier** and other science publishers to get where they are now. A key advantage was **Elsevier's** meta-data from **Scopus** that improved the information **Mendeley** could use to catalog and index articles. Another was the significant leverage **Elsevier** had to create with **Mendeley** an access environment simply unavailable in the decentralized world of library's subscriptions. Then there is user data.

**Henning** points out that **Mendeley's** business practice always shared data with publishers and other consumers. As early as 2009, one year after Beta release, **Mendeley** announced there were 100,000 registered users who had posted eight million articles. By 2012 **Mendeley** claimed two million users and who knows how many articles.

With this acquisition **Elsevier** owns significant data on how researchers use STM content. This helps guide their own title adds and drops as well as track the use of open access

content. They know who uses what, how much — all that Facebook-type data.

Hard on the heels of the press release, **Thomson**, proud owner for many years of three reference managers — Endnote, Pro-Cite, and Reference Manager — announced a free Web-based version of Endnote. And the **Thomson** download page offers a short tutorial on how to transfer **Mendeley** folder contents to Endnote. It's just drag and drop...

#### Your Links:

<http://www.infodocket.com/2013/04/23/bibliographic-management-thomson-reuters-launches-free-online-version-of-endnote/>

<http://elsevierconnect.com/what-you-really-want-to-know-about-mendeley-and-elsevier/>

<http://www.infotoday.eu/Articles/Editorial/Featured-Articles/Elsevier-and-Mendeley-%E2%80%93-an-interview-with-Victor-Henning--89053.aspx>

<http://blog.mendeley.com/progress-update/100000-users-and-8-million-articles/>

<http://blog.mendeley.com/academic-life/mendeley-has-two-million-users-to-celebrate-were-releasing-the-global-research-report/>

<http://www.mendeley.com/global-research-report/#.UXsqP7XCZ8E>

### Downloads from the Zeitgeist: DPLA

The **Digital Public Library of America** went online this April. A reception was held at the **Boston Public Library** to introduce the **DPLA** to the world; quite possibly glasses of digital champagne were held high to mark the event.

The **DPLA** crosses second in the digital derby for public access to public domain and rights cleared content. The **HathiTrust** broke the tape a long time ago. We've not heard much from them lately. They've got the full-text index that may be searched and analysed as data but doesn't retrieve books outside public domain. Yawn.

Part of the problem is that academics run these projects. **Robert Darnton**, **Harvard's** University Librarian and **DPLA** co-founder certainly has written much about the philosophy of a digital public library of America, mainly in the *New York Review of Books* which isn't *Wired* or even the *New York Times*. Both **HathiTrust** and **DPLA** could have benefited from some of the snake oil charm of the late **Steve Jobs**. Of course, **Job** famously

intoned people don't read — so he may have let us down.

**Darnton** doesn't so much excite as lecture in his writing and presentations as if the merits of the project speak easily for themselves. **Darnton** is the professor convincing us through the power of the teacher.

**HathiTrust's** problem is **Googlespeak** seasoned with academic administrative jargon. Absent from the rhetoric is the compelling marketing answer: why?

**HathiTrust** and **DPLA** wrinkle the Zeitgeist rather than ignite it.

Right now **DPLA** appears to be a historian's sandbox. Primary materials abound in the form of state and local digital collections indexed by a nice search engine. It fits perfectly **Darnton's** social historian role which sees the rest of us as little historians who desire to curate all into more coherent collections. There's the written record kids, get cracking.

The thing is kids today and many of us want to know other stuff. Write a good paper about **Jay-Z** and **Beyonce** engaged in post-cold war rapprochement with Cuba. What are the historical roots of rap?

The other thing is that the public library lives by its appeal to locals. They struggle to justify funding from outsiders. Who needs local funding for online if here is **DPLA**?

Thing is we took it for granted that someone would do this and they did. We can only react.

#### Your Links:

<http://newsbreaks.infotoday.com/NewsBreaks/Digital-Public-Library-of-America-DPLA-Makes-Its-Debut-89110.asp>

### Another Book: The New Digital Age by Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen

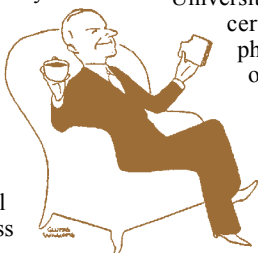
*What Would Eric Schmidt Do?*

The digital era is the Internet era. Ipso facto, the Internet/Digital Era is the Google Era.

We should always pay attention when **Eric Schmidt**, former **Google** CEO and **Google** Dad for its first decade, speaks or writes. He is, after all, the oracle of Sunnyvale and he thinks and pronounces from within the center of a company whose search engine, for many, defines the Internet.

A few years ago **Mr. Schmidt** moved over from his leadership at **Google** to allow a founder, **Larry Page**, to take the company forward into the millennium's next decade. Since then **Eric** has dabbled in areas of Internet policy — a broader, more global and historic role — suitable of his friendship and collegiality with **Al Gore** and other thinkers on **Google's** Board.

*continued on page 85*



The New Digital Age isn't about **Google** as much as it is about the world **Google** helped create and runs. In fact, if you pick up the book to get some insights into the company, it will disappoint. **Google** is everywhere and nowhere.

**Schmidt** stopped by the *Colbert Report* on the book tour. The show — catch it at the Comedy Central Website — is its best summary. **Schmidt**, who cannot stop smiling by nature — a net worth of seven billion helps — talked about the great things the Internet gave us in such a short time and what it promised. Central to digital pills, driverless cars, and hairstyling robots was connectivity. Today two billion users were connected to one another through the Internet benefiting from its disruptive impact on everything.

Of course, **Colbert** wanted a pair of **Google Glass**, the soon to be released browser in your eyeglasses mobile computing tool. And **Colbert** praised *Angry Birds*' transformative impact on his life. **Schmidt** didn't break smile and continued his argument, central to his thesis, of the certain disruption of five billion users of cheap smartphones worldwide. The New Digital Age is all about how to shape this world for the better.

Most of the book reads like a Foreign Policy article on global connectivity. The world they visited over the last few years profoundly touched them. They experienced a troubled world coping primarily through Internet connectivity.

In post-Saddam Iraq **Schmidt** and **Cohen** observed the absolute necessity of handheld phones to coordinate daily life. They concluded that virtual life trumped the physical world whose infra-structure was absolutely disrupted.

Similarly, the Arab Spring brought the virtual world into direct conflict with the physical.

Social media could be used to circumvent dictatorial control of a country's Internet. Literally revolution was a virtual step ahead of real world oppression.

Fortunately, the New Digital Age is not so naïve as to argue connectivity is an exclusively positive force.

**Schmidt** finds no love won in and about China. He writes carefully about state terrorism — the Chinese government as cyber bully — and China's perennial disregard for intellectual property — the advantages of state capitalism. **Schmidt** seems poised to say more about China and its relationship to **Google** but he stops short — preferring to frame China's Internet role as the world's problem.

On **Colbert**, **Schmidt** smiled when he told **Colbert** it was a real book, 330 pages, no pictures or charts. He thought this was a good thing. Actually, some charts could have helped explain the data and arguments made from the data. Also, the argument, developed from observation from both inside and outside the agency of change — a company like **Google** — could have used more research than that cited. There are only two books cited while the rest are Internet links from what's available from a **Google** search of the open Internet.

Without more authoritative sources, the book risks being supported on a wobbly research stool of just observation and Internet sources.

For example, recent scholarship disputes the view that social media played the major role in the Arab Spring. Human events aren't so easily reduced to technological change. And **Mr. Schmidt**, why not a single mention of books and technology's role in the wider access and availability of knowledge?

If we are going to believe, understand, and do what **Eric Schmidt** would do, we need more than foreign policy lite. What **Eric** would do is probably what **Google** would do and does; it takes much more to save the world than a search engine and one of its guiding leaders.

## WT Cox Cares

*"Our Serials Manager came into my office and said that she had something to tell me about WT Cox. Our Customer Service Specialist had called to apologize for a problem that had occurred and to let us know that the problem had been fixed. The thing is, we didn't know that there had even been a problem! WT Cox discovered it, contacted the publisher, and fixed it all that same day. It is that kind of proactive, service-oriented approach that we appreciate so much."*

Clint Chamberlain  
University of Texas at Arlington



[www.wtcox.com](http://www.wtcox.com)

### Your Citation and Links:

**Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen** "The New Digital Age: Reshaping the Future of People, Nations and Businesses" NY: Knopf, 2013.

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/425750/april-23-2013/eric-schmidt> 🐼

### Back Talk from page 86

So, now that I have a clearer picture of why **IBCs** have been established, the difficulties they experience, and at least a little about the life of a **ICB** librarian would be like, what should I do? Stay here in Arizona enjoying the life of a semi-retired academic librarian, or should I return to China to work in an **IBC** library? I will let you know what I decided to do in my next **Back Talk** article.

### Post Note

Following the publication of my February 2013 column concerning **Martin Luther King** and dreams for libraries, I received an email pointing to a group which played an important role in the advancement of minority librarians during and since the time of **Dr. King**: The **Black Caucus of ALA**. You can go to [http://](http://www.bcla.org)

[www.bcla.org](http://www.bcla.org) for a complete history of the **Black Caucus** and the part it played in all of this. Thanks to **Pamela Bluh**, the Associate Director for Technical Services and Administration at the **University of Maryland's Thurgood Marshall Law Library** for sharing this information with me.

### Resources Reviewed

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